
U.S. Senate
Republican Policy
Committee

Don Nickles, Chairman
Doug Badger, Staff Director



U.S. House
Republican
Conference

John Boehner, Chairman
Barry Jackson, Executive Director

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We Reform Welfare By Emphasizing Work and Personal Responsibility

Note: All estimates are based on preliminary figures available from CBO on November 16, 1995. Final CBO figures are expected on November 17, 1995.

President Clinton and liberal congressional Democrats have failed to tell Americans the truth about Republican efforts to reform welfare. Contrary to all the overheated rhetoric from the opponents of welfare reform, the Republican plan does not "cut" welfare spending. In fact, under the GOP proposal, federal welfare spending will increase by over \$100 billion over seven years.

Yet, to many Democrats, a \$100 billion increase amounts to a drastic cut in federal spending. The fact is, welfare can be reformed and federal spending on it doesn't have continue following a trajectory right off the charts. Even the Administration admits that there were 1.2 million fewer poor people in 1994 than there were in 1993, and that today there are 2 million fewer people on Food Stamps than there were in March of 1994.

We can turn the tide against mounting welfare dependency, but deficit spending isn't the answer. Real welfare reform will require a measure of personal responsibility on the part of welfare recipients and require that states are held directly accountable for reducing their own welfare caseloads. In addition, we can achieve real welfare reform while continuing to provide a necessary safety net for children threatened by poverty, but it will require common sense reforms to a system that does more to foster dependency and destroy families than to encourage self-sufficiency and to strengthen families.

Personal Responsibility in Exchange for Welfare Assistance

The overwhelming number of Americans choose to work every day to provide for themselves and their families and to take responsibility for their children's education and material needs. Any welfare reform bill that does not encourage those on welfare to accept these same basic responsibilities, or assist those seeking a way out of the welfare trap, is doomed to failure.

The Republican welfare bill, in stark contrast to the Democratic alternative, demands no more of those on welfare than ordinary Americans demand of themselves. Specifically, the Republican bill demands that:

Crime, broken homes, illiteracy, and chronic unemployment are welfare's legacy and these do not constitute a safety net. Nor will maintaining the current welfare system help our nation's children who are abandoned by their parents into poverty — 89 percent of children currently receiving AFDC benefits live in homes in which no father is present.

Our reforms provide:

- \$17 billion for a child care block grant, with \$7 billion dedicated for children of the working poor and the remaining \$10 billion targeted for the children of families on welfare;
- A 15 percent hardship exemption from the five-year lifetime limit on federal assistance, for which battered women would qualify;
- An exemption for families with children under the age of one from the bill's work requirements;
- An exemption for single parents from the bill's penalties for refusing to work if the parent is caring for a child under the age of 6 and is unable to find adequate child care;
- An \$800 million population growth fund for FYs 1997-2000 to assist high-growth states;
- An \$800 million "Contingency Fund" to help states whose welfare costs increase due to high unemployment; and
- A guaranteed entitlement to Foster Care and Adoption Assistance.

Saving Money Through Common-Sense Reforms

Our reforms will:

- Bar illegal aliens from all federal welfare assistance, except short-term disaster relief, emergency medical treatment, and immunizations;
- Disqualify non-citizens from receiving SSI and Food Stamps until they have become citizens or have worked long enough to qualify for Social Security;
- Deny new entrants to the U.S. all federally means-tested benefits for five years after arrival;
- Deny SSI cash assistance to drug addicts and alcoholics, but provides \$50 million for treatment of SSI recipients with a substance abuse condition;
- Establish for the first time a statutory definition for "childhood disability" to ensure that SSI benefits are reserved for truly disabled children and that applicants with less severe conditions receive lower cash benefits than more severely disabled children;
- Reduce the federal welfare bureaucracy by 15 percent within two years;
- Allow states to contract with religious providers for family services; and
- Offer states an optional block grant for the School Lunch and Breakfast programs.

Staff Contact: Jack Clark, 224-2946